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UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002851

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

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NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR X0XX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

1. Mideast
2. Anti-Terrorism Efforts

Key stories in the media:

Israel Hayom reported that U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace Senator George Mitchell is slated to arrive in Israel next Thursday. The reported purpose of his visit, which the newspaper says will

also include Cairo and Ramallah, is to make PM Benjamin Netanyahu and PA President Mahmoud Abbas renew the negotiations. The Jerusalem Post reported that Mitchell is expected to declare a framework for peace talks aimed at reconciling the Palestinian demand for a state based on the 1967 lines, with Israel's goal of a Jewish state with secure and recognized borders. The Jerusalem Post quoted diplomatic officials as saying that Israel is very close to agreeing with the U.S. on terms of reference for the talks that will be very close to guidelines spelled out by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in her statement following Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's announcement in late November of a 10-month settlement moratorium. In the statement, which The Jerusalem Post says is expected to be the touchstone for the diplomatic process for some time, Clinton said, "We believe that through good-faith negotiations the parties can mutually agree on an outcome which ends the conflict and reconciles the Palestinian goal of an independent and viable state based on the 1967 lines, with agreed swaps, and the Israeli goal of a Jewish state with secure and recognized borders that reflect subsequent developments and meet Israeli security requirements."

All media (banners in Israel Hayom and Makor Rishon-Hatzofe) quoted a Hamas-affiliated Web site that cited a claim by Abu Abdullah, the head of Hamas intelligence in Gaza, that Israel attempted to kidnap a senior Hamas official in order to obtain information about Gilad Shalit's detention the place and convey it to Shin Bet. Israel Radio reported that a Hamas delegation is supposed to convey to Egypt its response to Israel's offer regarding the Shalit deal.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Israeli defense officials as saying yesterday, a day after the High Court of Justice ordered the IDF to open Route 443 to Palestinian traffic, that the Defense Ministry is preparing legal arguments against an expected spate of court petitions to open other roads currently only open to Israeli cars because of security concerns. Yediot reported that PM Netanyahu told associates that the ruling endangers people's lives. Haaretz and Maariv quoted right-wing Knesset members as saying that the Supreme Court's ruling is proof that the court's composition must be altered.

Maariv cited the assessment of Western diplomats that U.S. intelligence, which has understood that it had erred in its determined 2007 assertion that Iran is not driving to procure nuclear weapons. The newspaper reported that the international intelligence community and the Mossad are awaiting the publication of the new U.S. report on the subject. A headline in the daily reads: "The United States' Moral Stock-Taking." The Jerusalem Post reported that Canadian human rights activist and former Justice Minister and Attorney-General Irwin Cotler revealed at a Jerusalem press conference yesterday a petition he is spearheading that calls on governments and the U.N. to take immediate and massive diplomatic and economic action against Iran. Cotler accused the Iranian government of violating international law regarding nuclear weapons development, incitement to genocide, state-sponsored terrorism and human rights.

Maariv reported that Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula Da Silva is initiating a peace plan between Israel and the Palestinians.

The Jerusalem Post's Web page quoted Israeli officials as saying yesterday that the government plans today to update its decision to freeze settlement construction and thereby return some of the decision-making powers to the local settlement councils. Under the current decision, made last month by the government, all construction is forbidden in the 150 settlements and outposts in the West Bank. A revision of the order is currently underway and will give local councils in the West Bank the authority to approve projects related to public infrastructure and small repairs on existing homes.

Haaretz reported that outgoing Attorney General Menachem Mazuz is expected to decide whether Israeli-Arab actor and director Mohammed Bacri should be indicted for his controversial film "Jenin, Jenin," the subject of which is war crimes possibly committed by IDF troops in Operation Defensive Shield in April 2002.

Maariv quoted associates of Kadima head Tzipi Livni as saying that

she will agree to Knesset Member Shaul Mofaz's suggestions that the party primaries be moved up. The associates explained that opposition within the party will thus be eliminated.

Echoed by The Jerusalem Post's Web site, Israel Radio reported that Zeev Baran, Poland's Honorary Consul in Jerusalem, has complained that ultra-Orthodox harassed Christian clergy and vandalized monasteries. Baran warned that these acts could lead to anti-Jewish deeds abroad. The radio reported that Baran met this week with Christian and ultra-Orthodox representatives in the Jerusalem Municipality to try and put a stop to the phenomena without involving the police, and it was agreed that the ultra-Orthodox representatives would act to curb the attacks. An adviser on ultra-Orthodox affairs to the Jerusalem Mayor condemned the harassment, saying: "These acts are similar to anti-Semitic attacks abroad."

Leading media reported that, in a precedent-setting appointment, Jamal Hakrush, Israel Police's highest-ranking Muslim police officer, will become the deputy commander of the coastal region.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) took the Catholic Church to task this week, disputing "historical evidence" cited by Church officials as proof that World War II-era Pope Pius XII had worked to save Jews from the Holocaust. The Jerusalem Post reported that Abraham Foxman, the ADL's National (U.S.) Director, called the claim an apparent campaign of misinformation, saying that it is crucial for the Vatican to open Holocaust-era archives now.

I. Mideast:

Block Quotes:

I. There Is No Deluxe Occupation

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (12/31): "The High Court of Justice's decision, in a panel headed by Supreme Court President Dorit Beinisch, to end the ban on Palestinians using Route 443 is one of the most correct and just decisions the court has made in recent years.... Over the course of 42 years of occupation, an approach has taken root which holds that the security and even convenience of the settlers take precedence over the property rights and welfare of the Palestinians.... As was to be expected, Knesset members from the right attacked the Supreme Court with the questionable assertion that removing the roadblocks at the entrance of the villages near the road would undermine the security of travelers. These Knesset members ignore the principle behind the court's ruling and the rules of international law, which enable the military administration to violate property rights only if this is done for the benefit of the local population.... The barring of Palestinians from Route 443 was one of the ugliest aspects of a deluxe occupation. Real security cannot be achieved by roadblocks, fences and separate roads, but only by a fair peace accord that will bring an end to the occupation."

II. Create a Dilemma for Hamas

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (12/31): "Hamas has no interest in a prisoner exchange deal, and the ongoing negotiations only intensify the psychological warfare that it uses on Israeli society and magnifies its strength.... So how is Gilad Shalit to be released at this stage? By using the mind, by thinking and by employing dilemma tactics.... The first dilemma we would be creating for Hamas: we would be revealing whom they want released, and even worse for it: whom they didn't ask to be released. This in itself would create chaos for Hamas with the families and the Palestinian public. Let them drown in an act of their own causing. The second dilemma: because Hamas has no interest in a deal but only in never-ending negotiations, it will face a terrible dilemma.... The families of the prisoners will put heavy pressure on it to wrap up the deal and to accept it, and it is liable to be perceived as a failure in Palestinian eyes, as a loser who was unable to achieve anything."

With its own hands it will have lost all its achievements. True, such an Israeli position requires courage and determination, something that I am not certain that all our leaders, and our public, have, but that is how negotiations are conducted in the Middle East. The other side must be put into a dilemma and given the sense that tomorrow it will get a lot less than today. Such a dilemma will force it to agree to the conditions.

III. QJourney to Nowhere

Far left columnist Gideon Levy wrote in Ha'aretz (12/31): QGeorge Mitchell will be here soon, Benjamin Netanyahu has already been to Cairo, Mahmoud Abbas is on his way. In the end there will be a summit. In Washington they'll be elated, in Europe they'll be exhilarated, the settlers will fulminate, and the leftists will somnambulate. Yet another scene in the theater of the absurd, another act in the endless grotesque burlesque. Here we are again: The season of negotiations is upon us, negotiations that amount to nothing.... It's been a horrifyingly dreary tale of sterile diplomacy, a 40-year journey to nowhere.... The time for words is over. Stop negotiating, start doing. Lifting the blockade on Gaza and declaring a perpetual freeze on building in the settlements would do more than a thousand formulations. Someone who wants two states doesn't build even one more balcony. This is the litmus test of Israel's true intentions. Without taking these steps, everything else is a waste of time, the time of the negotiators and of all of us. Does Netanyahu mean to take any of these steps? That is very doubtful, troublingly so.

IV. QImagined Deterrence

Gabi Sheffer, a liberal political science professor at the Hebrew University, wrote in Ha'aretz (12/31): QThe prevalent assumption [among Israel's political and military leaderships] is that the Second Lebanon War, the bombing of the nuclear facility in Syria, and Operation Cast Lead have greatly strengthened Israeli deterrence. The proof is the present quiet on the borders. But then, almost in the same breath and without explaining the inherent contradiction, they all say this quiet won't last forever. The conclusion: Israel must prepare energetically for the possibility of a military or terrorist outbreak, and even thwart it with a preventive strike. The calls for such an offensive primarily refer, of course, to Iran.... Israeli leaders must stop spreading the idea that Israel has the ability to take decisive deterrent action and must initiate a military operation every few years to preserve that ability. Instead of preparing for an attack on Iran, Syria, Hizbullah, and Hamas, the government should be investing a lot more in direct attempts to resolve -- by negotiations -- the conflicts with Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinians. This would also reduce the fear of Iran to a large extent.

1V. QA Taboo Question for Israelis

Liberal columnist Larry Derfner wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (12/31): QThe question we have to ask ourselves is this: if anybody treated us like we're treating the people in Gaza, what would we do?.... During the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign, Barack Obama visited Sderot, saying, QIf missiles were falling where my two daughters sleep, I would do everything in order to stop that.Q Absolutely right. I wonder, though, what sort of empathetic reaction he might have had if he'd also visited the Jabalya refugee camp that summer. I wonder how he'd react if he visited Jabalya now. And how would we react? If we Israelis could go to Gaza and see in person what we've done to that place and its people, would we be capable of empathy? If we thought of our children living in a country that was just like postwar Gaza, would we allow ourselves to think what we might do? We can't go to Gaza, but we have to start using our imagination. We have to dare to put ourselves in those people's place. And we have to stop doing to them what we would never allow anyone to do to us. Otherwise, we Israelis have no conscience, and little by little we become capable of anything.

12. Anti-Terrorism Efforts:

Block Quotes:

QAmerican Anxiety

The ultra-Orthodox Yated NeQeman editorialized (12/31): QPresident Obama admitted this week that the [American] intelligence and defense systems suffered Qsystemic failureQ.... The massive terrorist attacks have put to a test the limits of American power and the fact that the strongest and richest army in the world cannot always protect its citizens. America is vulnerable to an attack. Since that day [9/11] America has abandoned its invincibility and started to feel that even the greatest superpower cannot provide full security to its citizens.

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